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Public information activities for United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 55/136 B, the General Assembly recalled its resolution 54/113 of 10 December 1999 concerning the proclamation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and encouraged the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information with a view to disseminating information on and drawing international attention to the dialogue among civilizations and the impact it could have on promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and international cooperation. The General Assembly also welcomed the decision taken by the Department of Public Information to launch a new web site to publicize the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and requested him to continue to implement the promotional campaign to ensure that the Year enjoys the broadest international support, and to report thereon and also on all follow-up activities in that respect to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session.

2. To implement that mandate, the Department of Public Information has undertaken a campaign aimed at promoting the concept of dialogue among civilizations involving all segments of society. The activities will help foster a positive perception of diversity and depict the United Nations as a forum where such a dialogue can flourish and bear fruit in every field of human endeavour.

II. Public information activities for the Year

3. In coordination with Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the Department has planned the activities described below.

1. Exhibits, seminars and other events

4. To coordinate United Nations system-wide activities in support of the Year and discuss future activities and possible areas of cooperation, the Department organized a meeting of the representatives of United Nations organizations and agencies at Headquarters. Among other things, all agreed to make a concerted effort to convey as part of their public information programmes the central message of the Year, with special emphasis on publicizing the findings of the Group of Eminent Persons for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, which are expected to be presented by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

5. During 2001, the Department will organize at Headquarters seven exhibits on the world's cultural

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diversity, including an exhibition of the Senegalese sculptor Ousmane Sow, expected to be shown in the United Nations Garden. Another exhibit, organized in association with the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, will depict the opening of trade routes that began the dialogue among civilizations. In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is considering inviting Member States to participate in an exhibit at Headquarters featuring cities, old and new, as a contribution to the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, which will take place from 6 to 8 June 2001. The exhibit, tentatively named "Cities: home of civilization", will address the role of cities as the birthplace of civilizations.

6. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will organize, initiate or sponsor a broad range of activities in areas covering education, culture, science and communication. Activities will include conferences, colloquia, publications and media productions. In September 2000, UNESCO organized an international congress in Tashkent on inter-religious dialogue. It has also completed a video on the proceedings of the round table on dialogue among civilizations, at the level of heads of State, which was convened by UNESCO with the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran and held at Headquarters on 5 September 2000.

7. Major events planned by UNESCO in 2001 include an international conference on dialogue among civilizations, to be held at Vilnius from 23 to 26 April 2001, under the joint auspices of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, the President of Poland and the Director-General of UNESCO. Jointly with the United Nations University, UNESCO will convene an international conference on dialogue among civilizations involving political leaders, Nobel laureates and internationally renowned scholars in Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan, on 2 and 3 August 2001.

8. UNESCO will also cooperate with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as academic institutions, in promoting the dialogue among civilizations through a number of events, including the summit of the States members of the International Organization of la Francophonie, to be organized jointly by that organization and the Government of Lebanon and scheduled to take place in Beirut in September 2001.

9. To promote the observance of the Year, the United Nations Office at Geneva has undertaken a series of activities that the United Nations Information Service will support and publicize. A film festival showcasing more than 80 documentaries from over 40 countries around the world on North-South relations and cultural diversity will be held from 26 to 30 March 2001. Exhibits dealing with Navajo Indian art and pre-Colombian art will be held in May and June. These and other events will be co-sponsored by various Member States.

2. Public service announcements

10. The Department, in cooperation with the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year and assisted by United Nations information centres and services, is arranging for the production of 12 60-second public service announcements. Funded externally by Cahoots.com and produced by TVE of London, each of the public service announcements will highlight the life of an "unsung hero of dialogue", people who have reached across the "divide" to the "other" and kept alive the flame of humanity. The objective is to use this positive material to counter the negative images of war often portrayed in the media, and to give a face and an image to these unsung heroes.

11. Two of the public service announcements have been completed and are now with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Cable News Network (CNN) for broadcast consideration. Four other "unsung heroes" have been identified, and a compilation of the six public service announcements will be distributed, in English, French and Spanish, to United Nations information centres and services as well as other outlets by the end of February 2001. The format will allow for adaptation into other languages, as needed. The remaining public service announcements will be produced as soon as six other "heroes" are identified, beginning in March 2001. The Department of Public Information will assist in arranging for broadcast of the public service announcements on television networks around the world, including on CNN and BBC, and will incorporate them in its global distribution of "UN in Action" television programmes.

12. At the United Nations World Television Forum organized by the Department of Public Information and held at Headquarters on 16 and 17 November 2000, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for

the Year addressed over 1,000 top executives from the world's major television networks, urging them to promote the dialogue and convey its message to their respective audiences, including through the public service announcements being produced for the Year.

3. The Year on the United Nations web site

13. The Department of Public Information has set up a new web site, entitled "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations 2001", at *www.un.org/Dialogue*. Now available in all six official languages, the site encourages and facilitates worldwide dialogue through interactive, intellectually stimulating pages, and provides information and news regarding events related to the Year, including the above-mentioned video public-service announcements. Designed to appeal to all cultures and age groups, the site also highlights the Group of Eminent Persons that has been invited to prepare a contribution on the issue of dialogue, focusing on the perception of diversity. UNESCO has also set up a web site for Member States to input information at *www.unesco.org/dialogue2001*. It contains a live web cast of the round table held at Headquarters on 5 September 2000.

4. Logo and guidelines

14. In consultation with the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year, the Department has prepared a logo for the Year. The logo and guidelines for its use have been approved by the Publications Board and sent to all United Nations information centres and services. Intended to promote greater awareness of the activities pertaining to the Year, the logo is being used in relevant publications and videos, as well as on the web page. The design (with its accompanying text in the six official languages) is available in hard copy as well as electronic format.

5. Brochure and poster

15. The Department has finalized the text of a general background brochure, introducing the objectives of the Year and outlining the opportunities for change it offers. The English version will be available shortly, and printing in the five other official languages will follow. Similarly, a poster will be produced in the six official languages.

6. Press, radio and television coverage

16. The Department will provide regular press, radio and television coverage of programmes and events related to the Year.

7. United Nations information centres and services

17. The United Nations information centres and services will adapt the campaign's messages to local realities and translate information materials in local languages. Partnerships will be sought with non-governmental groups and media organizations to maximize popular participation in the observance of the Year. They will promote the objectives of the Year through various activities, such as seminars, briefings, exhibitions and press conferences.

8. Educational institutions and non-governmental organizations

18. At the Third Annual Student Conference on Human Rights, held on 8 December 2000 at Headquarters and organized by the Department, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year addressed over 400 students from Canada, Mexico and the United States of America.

19. Non-governmental organizations associated with the Department of Public Information have been briefed on the objectives of the Year. On 26 October 2000, the weekly briefing attended by some 200 representatives of non-governmental organizations featured the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year, who briefed them on the preparations for the Year. Non-governmental organizations were encouraged to organize their own outreach programmes. On 9 December 2000, the Department co-sponsored a conference with the World Family Organization, on the theme "Dialogue among civilizations: the family perspective", at which the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year was the keynote speaker. Representatives of some 70 non-governmental organizations and Government officials attended the event, which was held at Headquarters.

20. Additional activities in support of the Year continue to be developed and implemented.